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DEPARTMENT FOR DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PBTS KPKO UNSC GG RU

SUBJECT: ABKHAZIA: GENEVA-STYLE MEETING IN BONN: SMALL STEPS FORWARD

REF: TBILISI 459

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 27 and 28, representatives of the Friends of the UN Secretary General (FSG), together with the UN, met the Georgian and Abkhaz sides for a Geneva-style meeting in Bonn. Most significantly, the sides agreed to resume Quadripartite meetings on law enforcement cooperation in July and agreed to a Joint Fact Finding Group (JFFG) investigation of the disappearance of David Sigua, an ethnic Georgian official from the Abkhaz de facto administration. Both sides agreed to explore confidence building measures endorsed by UNSCR 1752, including establishing maritime communication between Sukhumi and Trabzon, Turkey, with appropriate custom controls. They also agreed to a Steering Committee meeting for the EC-funded rehabilitation program in Abkhazia during the week of July 2. Additionally, they agreed to continued people-to-people contacts and to continue cooperation on threats such as African Swine Fever. Although the Georgians repeated an unconditional offer for a meeting between President Saakashvili and de facto "president" Bagapsh, the Abkhaz, supported by Russia, insisted such a meeting needed advance coordination on a guaranteed outcome such as the lifting of CIS economic sanctions or an agreement on non-use of force. The Friends expressed concern about the security situation, particularly in Gali, and urged the Georgian side to move a Patriotic Youth Camp in the village of Gunmukhuri away from the ceasefire line to avoid potential mishaps. To follow-up on these commitments, the UN will work to coordinate monthly meetings of the sides in Tbilisi or Sukhumi to monitor implementation. After meetings between FSG coordinator Hans-Dieter Lucas with both sides in the region during the week of July 2, the UN may consider a high-level letter to the sides from New York urging progress on the agreed cooperation mechanisms. End summary.

¶2. (C) On June 27 and 28, the UN hosted representatives of the FSG (U.S., UK, Germany, France, and Russia) in Bonn for a Geneva-style meeting with the Georgian and Abkhaz sides. UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Under Secretary Jean-Marie Guehenno chaired the discussion. Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Jean Arnault, together with members of his staff and a representative of the UN's Department of Political Affairs (DPA), were also present. Representing the Georgians were State Minister for Conflict Resolution Merab Antadze and Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Eka Zguladze, together with Dimitri Manjavidze (one of Antadze's deputies) and Alexander Nalbandov (a representative from the MFA). Representing the Abkhaz were de facto "foreign minister" Sergey Shamba and Martin Targyl from his staff as well as two German-based members of the Abkhaz diaspora, Khibla Amichba and Zeki Kap. The FSG were represented by EUR DAS Matthew Bryza, Sir Brian Fall (UK), Hans-Dieter Lucas (Germany), Veronique Bujon-Barre (France), and Vladislav Chernov (Russian Federation), as well

as their delegations.

UN EMPHASIZES SECURITY, DIALOGUE AND CBMS

¶3. (C) The meetings began with an introduction by Guehenno followed by separate presentations from each of the sides. Following a dinner consultation the previous evening with the Friends, Guehenno emphasized three main points in his introduction: one, that the Friends are concerned about the security situation in Abkhazia and would like a commitment from both sides to refrain from provocations that would lead to an escalation of violence; two, that the Friends urge a resumption of dialogue between the sides, especially the resumption of regular Quadripartite meetings to discuss law enforcement cooperation; and three, that the Friends urge the sides to review confidence building measures presented at the Geneva meeting in February (reftel) and endorsed by the UN Security Council in April, with a view to implementing them in order to build trust and move toward a settlement.

GEORGIANS SUPPORT RE-ESTABLISHING DIALOGUE

¶4. (C) Antadze expressed Georgian concern about the lack of dialogue and hoped that the Friends would help to re-establish dialogue in existing formats as well as in other formats. Stressing the importance of the return of internally displaced persons (IDP)s, Antadze said that the Abkhaz were undertaking measures, including legislative measures, which were preventing their return. To address these concerns, he suggested resuming the Special Commission

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on IDPs called for in the April 4, 1994 quadripartite agreement. Antadze welcomed the creation of a UN human rights office in Gali as a first step. He argued that its implementation was important for the return of IDPs. He noted the importance of UN Civilian Police and expressed a need for a clear, transparent program with clarity on their role and mandate. Antadze said the Georgians have ideas in the economic field that could also increase trust and confidence among various strata of the population.

¶5. (C) Antadze said the Abkhaz were blocking direct dialogue. On Georgian presence in the Upper Kodori (or "Upper Abkhazia" as they call it), Antadze said that the Georgians honored the commitments with regards to transparency that they made in Geneva in February, as verified by monitoring missions by the UN and CIS Peacekeeping Force. He said the Abkhaz refused to participate in the security dialogue that was supposed to follow the Geneva meeting. He said the Abkhaz had also canceled talks planned between Prime Minister Noghaideli and the Abkhaz "prime minister" as well as discussions planned for energy experts from both sides to discuss the Enguri power plant situation. On the disappearance of Sigua, Antadze proposed a JFFG investigation. On the Patriotic Camp near the ceasefire line, he proposed that the UN and FSG visit the camp to dispel international concerns of its function and purpose, which he said was to bring together young people from Georgia to participate in sports activities and entertainment programs.

¶6. (C) The Western Friends welcomed the Georgian commitment to dialogue and expressed continuing concern over getting to the bottom of the Sigua case and about the location of the patriot youth camp - not for its activities but for the potential of youth to undertake an action that could lead to an escalation of conflict. Bryza urged the Georgians to consider relocating the camp to a less sensitive area. Bryza and the other Friends urged the Georgians to review the CBMs endorsed by the Security Council and to resume Quadripartite meetings. Striking a different tone, Chernov said the

Georgian side is continuing to hinder progress toward a settlement, despite expressing willingness to move forward. He alleged ongoing violations of the Moscow Agreement, including overflights; deployment of over 600 police in the Security Zone; illegal movements into the Upper Kodori; and the illegal presence of armed groups, including two new alleged observation points established in Abkhaz-controlled areas that Moscow had informed him about that very morning. Chernov noted dourly that such actions could lead to the activation of military activity in the region and that the Georgians could not expect flexibility from the Abkhaz on refugee returns in the face of them. Chernov also attacked a recent Georgian MFA statement that the separatist conflicts were of a territorial and not an ethnic nature. He said it belied an attitude toward ethnic minorities that was counterproductive to the conflict resolution process.

¶ 17. (C) Antadze responded that every time there is a meeting planned between the Georgians and the Abkhaz, there is a provocation from the Russian side which makes dialogue difficult. Zguladze said that the Georgians had appointed a Coordinator for the Quadripartite meetings last fall. She said that only two security incidents had taken place in Upper Kodori since the Georgians regained control: a military attack against the Minister of Internal Affairs and another on March 11 against the government building. Zguladze said that UN investigations into both attacks had shown that Georgia is not instigating provocations in the Upper Kodori. She expressed disappointment that the final report of the JFFG investigation into the March 11 attack had not yet been made public and expressed hope that it would in the near future. (Note: To the FSG, Arnault said that the report was in the process of being translated into Russian; he hoped that the JFFG members might agree to its findings as soon as June 29. End note.) She pushed back against sensitivities concerning the location of the patriot camp, nothing that there was no possible way it could be considered a threat to the security situation. Zguladze continued that Georgia exploded all weapons recovered from warlord Emzar Kvitsiani and had reduced the number of police to 270 and that this was confirmed by CIS PKF and UN monitoring missions. She cautioned that Georgia may have to reassess its position on reduction of police based on the results of the report on the March 11 attack. Zguladze acknowledged that logistical problems contributed to continuing Georgian violations on movements in the Security Zone, but she said the violations had decreased and that the notification mechanism had improved. Nalbandov countered Chernov's allegation about the ethnic prejudice in Georgian society by reiterating Georgia's position that the conflicts are

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territorial and drawing on his own Armenian heritage to legitimize his claim that Georgia's constitution and international commitments protect minority rights.

ABKHAZ START TOUGH BUT THEN SOFTEN

¶ 18. (C) Shamba opened with a plea to allow the Abkhaz to address the UN Security Council as they are "equal parties in the conflict." He claimed that UN documents describing the conflict had changed over time to call it the "conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia" and that the UN should go back to the original formulation ("Georgia/Abkhazia conflict") which he believed gave equal weight to the Abkhaz position. Shamba claimed that the Georgians were conducting ongoing provocations that violated UNSCR 1716, the Moscow Agreement, and a certain "Gagra Agreement" of 1998 that contained clear formulations on the Kodori Valley. He claimed there were more than 1300 police in the Security Zone, whereas only 600 are allowed. He also cited the possibility that the patriot camp near the ceasefire line could be used as a military camp by the Georgians. Finally, he pointed to what he called the kidnapping of Abkhaz officials, including Chakaberia and

Sigua. He claimed that witnesses knew that Sigua was killed and even where he was buried. After this became public, he said the body was exhumed and taken somewhere else. He claimed that Georgia was in violation of the Moscow Agreement with an expansion of its presence in Upper Kodori and the establishment of two new observation points (in Abkhaz-controlled territory.) He agreed on the need to return to dialogue and called for the Georgians to consider Abkhaz suggestions in Kodori, including training local police to perform the police functions there. The Abkhaz, he said, are ready to discuss establishing relations with the diaspora but he cautioned that the Abkhaz could not resume negotiations with Georgians until difficult issues were resolved. Nonetheless, he said open lines of communication benefited both sides.

¶9. (C) In response, Bryza focused on the goal of the meeting: to move beyond recriminations and re-start dialogue. He said the U.S. speaks bilaterally to Georgia and as part of the FSG on the importance of avoiding provocative actions in Abkhazia, including on the patriot camp. He said the U.S. also raises the Sigua case with Georgian officials. Bryza suggested that the Abkhaz share their information on Sigua with the Georgians to try to get to the bottom of the case. He asked for clarification from the UN on the number of police in the Upper Kodori and the Security Zone. He stressed the importance of implementing CBMs, not just talking about them. On the question of appearing at the UN Security Council, Bryza said that such an appearance would be symbolic only, as the UNSC members with the exception of China, are all represented by the FSG. He said the U.S. could support such a trip after there is something important to report, such as direct dialogue with Tbilisi at the highest level. The other Friends supported Bryza's call for dialogue, underscored the importance of avoiding provocations, and pushed for progress on CBMs. Softening, Shamba responded that the Abkhaz are ready to continue dialogue, including resuming the Quadripartite meetings and participating in a joint investigation of Sigua. He said that the Abkhaz are ready to discuss CBMs, including the opening of maritime communications with UNOMIG and CIS PKF controlling the arrival of ships at the port of Sukhumi. (He noted that ships from Georgia arrive regularly in Sukhumi, but that they are all, of course, illegal.)

GETTING SIDES TO COMMIT TO SPECIFIC STEPS

¶10. (C) During a consultative meeting among the FSG and the UN, Arnault reported that UNOMIG and the CIS PKF were currently undertaking joint verification of armed personnel in the Security Zone. He agreed with Shamba that the Georgians likely have more than the 600 police allowed in the Security Zone, which encompasses the Gali and Zugdidi regions. Arnault estimated the number to be around 1000. However, he said that Georgian law enforcement personnel in Upper Kodori numbered 283 police and 100 Svan border guards. Arnault agreed with the Abkhaz that the number of police should be rationalized but noted that the March 11 attack had muddied the waters⁸ and made this more difficult. The UN passed out a map of Abkhaz and UN sightings of unidentified personnel in Abkhaz-controlled areas, along with pictures of a group of seven unidentified personnel sighted by the UN in an Abkhaz-controlled area north of Upper Kodori. Arnault later said it was impossible to know who these people were

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after Bryza pointed out that it was unfounded to assume they were Georgians (as was presupposed by some of the captions on the map). Led by Guehenno, the FSG representatives agreed on the need to press for concrete mechanisms and commitments by the two sides. They drafted a page of written questions for each side to respond to at their meetings later in the day.

GEORGIANS AGREE TO SPECIFIC STEPS

¶11. (C) In a follow-on meeting, the Georgian delegation went through the list provided to them point by point, starting with security issues and moving to CBMS:

SECURITY

-- On the question of the presence of reportedly Georgian personnel in the lower Kodori, Zguladze said categorically that there are no Georgian movements or deployments in lower Kodori. She said she had just checked this information again today and that the official response from the Ministry is that Georgia is also worried about these elements which are in an area controlled by the Abkhaz and patrolled by the UN and CIS Peacekeeping Force. She offered Georgian cooperation to help the UN identify these groups.

-- On the number of personnel in the Security Zone, Zguladze said there are 600 personnel in the Security Zone and offered that the UN could verify this claim.

-- On the reDeployment of the patriotic camp, Zguladze suggested that the FSG visit the cap and assess whether it is a security risk.

-- On the appointment of a Coordinator for the Quadripartite meetings, Zguladze confirmed that a Coordinator had been appointed and is the Head of Division of the Department of Constitutional Security. His name is Zurab Logua.

-- On agreement to hold a Quadripartite meeting in July, Zguladze said the Georgian side is ready to participate.

-- On rationalizing forces in Upper Kodori, Zguladze said that the Georgians had already reduced the presence in Upper Kodori from 800 to 270 and that although further decreases could be considered the threat assessment following the March 11 attack indicates that this is the number needed to keep the population safe. She said that about 35 percent of the police in Upper Kodori are locals.

CBMS

-- On allowing contacts between the Abkhaz and diaspora in Turkey, Antadze contended that this was not an issue raised in the last Geneva meeting and that there are contacts which are informal and ongoing.

-- On opening maritime communications between Sukhumi and Trabzon, Turkey, Antadze said that Georgia supports this provided that there is a process developed with Georgia to resolve issues regarding customs procedures.

-- On encouraging contacts between Georgians and Abkhaz, George Mangivadze said that there were no cases where the Georgian side prevented such contacts. He said Georgia had no conditions on such contacts.

-- On combating African Swine Fever, Antadze said that Georgia is already cooperating with the Abkhaz in this and other areas but it is not public at the request of the Abkhaz side. All agreed for the UN to give each side a list of concrete steps it could take and ask for a response.

To follow-up on these commitments, Antadze proposed that the UN convene monthly meetings with the sides and the FSG in Tbilisi and Sukhumi in order to monitor their implementation.

ABKHAZ AGREE TO SPECIFIC STEPS

¶12. (C) In a separate meeting with the Abkhaz, Shamba also responded to the UN paper (tailored for the Abkhaz) point by point:

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DIALOGUE

-- On resuming Quadripartite meetings, he said the Abkhaz are ready to start the work in July.

-- On allowing a JFFG investigation into Sigua, he said the Abkhaz are ready to participate and start immediately, perhaps even re-starting the Quadripartite meetings with the Sigua case.

-- On participating in a meeting of the EC-funded Steering Committee, Shamba said the Abkhaz are ready to participate in a meeting scheduled to take place in a few days.

-- On a meeting at the leadership level, Shamba reiterated that a meeting without an outcome would have a negative impact and that the Abkhaz would be prepared to participate in a carefully prepared meeting which has the outcome of a signed document on the non-use of force or the lifting of CIS economic sanctions.

CBMS

-- On supporting contacts between Georgians and Abkhaz, Shamba said that the Abkhaz support contacts and pointed to a recently convened meeting on NATO in Istanbul by the Heinrich Boell Foundation. He noted that this included some Abkhaz officials. (Note: When asked privately whether this might mean the Abkhaz would now support a joint trip to NATO with Abkhaz and Georgian officials, Shamba clarified that the Abkhaz could support contacts between non-officials but not between officials. End note.)

-- On cooperation on combating African Swine Fever, Shamba said the Georgians and Abkhaz already cooperative on both Avian Flu and African Swine Fever.

-- On supporting the ICRC initiative on missing persons, Shamba said that the Abkhaz are ready to cooperate.

¶13. (C) In a final consultative meeting of the FSG and the UN, all agreed that the German coordinator, who would be traveling to Georgia the week of July 2 would reinforce the points of the meeting to Tbilisi and Sukhumi. The FSG also agreed that the UN may consider following-up with a high-level letter to the sides from New York urging progress on the agreed cooperative mechanisms. Finally, the FSG agreed on a press statement to be released following a final meeting of the sides together to review the draft. In response to a request by EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby, conveyed by Germany, to include the EU in future Geneva meetings, the FSG decided the question bore further consideration by capitals, but that it did not rise to the level of a formal request. Guehenno warned against changing an effective format. Chernov noted that such a decision would require a decision at a very high level in Moscow. Bujon-Barre said she had not discussed the issue with Semneby in Paris, as Semneby had apparently suggested to Lucas. In a private sidebar, Fall approached the U.S. team with even more words of warning: he said Semneby's request was just one exploratory "tentacle" of an EU that wanted to supplant member states in such formats, noting that -- taken to its logical conclusion -- the EU would want to replace its member states at the UNSC. He further warned that, contrary to the most predictable analysis, Russia might actually accept the EU as a member of

the FSG, if only to use that development in the months that followed to weaken its effectiveness.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) More came out of this Geneva meeting than could have been expected, considering the heightened tensions in Abkhazia which are partly due to the fact that all Abkhaz eyes remain on Kosovo. The resumption of the Quadripartite meetings is a significant and important step. These meetings between law enforcement officials have not taken place since last October. Although they will not stop potential incidents, they can diffuse them by creating a forum in which to discuss them. The trick will be implementing the commitments made by each side. We believe that Antadze's idea to hold monthly meetings to oversee implementation is a good one and it will help to keep the sides' feet to the fire. End comment.

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¶15. (U) DAS Bryza cleared this message.
TEFFT